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SUBJECT: VOTER REGISTRATION: ELECTORAL COMMISSION ADMITS PROBLEMS, BUT SAYS "NO CHAOS" ON ELECTION DAY

**¶1.** (U) SUMMARY. Electoral Commission (EC) Chairman Afari-Gyan began a September 5 meeting of the Inter-party Advisory Committee (IPAC) by admitting that there were problems with the registration exercise, which saw 290% more new registrants than a similar exercise two years ago. He asserted that the political parties themselves are the source of some of the problems. The EC will exhibit the register from October 5 to 11, giving the parties the chance to challenge the eligibility of registrants. The test now is for the EC to successfully oversee a revision voter rolls that appear to be inflated by multiple registrants and under-age voters. It is not yet clear how the EC and the parties will agree to cleanse the rolls, a process that will be further complicated by being a month behind schedule. Still, the Chairman said that there would "be no chaos" on election day. END SUMMARY.

**¶2.** (U) Electoral Commission Chairman Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan opened the meeting by giving the representatives data on the recent voter registration exercise. Afari-Gyan noted that 1,835,417 new voters were added to the rolls during the limited registration exercise (primarily intended for registering individuals who reached the voting age since the last limited exercise, in 2006). He added that the increase was 290% greater than resulted from the 2006 exercise. Afari-Gyan said that either Ghana's population was greater than previously believed or "something went wrong with the particular exercise."

**¶3.** (U) The Chairman added that the exhibition of the rolls would take place from October 5 to 11, providing the parties an opportunity to challenge voter qualifications. The exhibition of rolls will be done at the local voting district level. Afari-Gyan also said that nominations for presidential and parliamentary candidates would be due on the 16 and 17th of October. (NOTE: The EC had planned to exhibit the rolls between mid-July and mid-August. END NOTE.). Finally, Afari-Gyan announced that from September 12 to 16 photos would be taken of registrants who could not, for technical reasons be photographed during the exercise. The EC will provide parties with CD-roms of the voter registry, but without the photos of registrants. (NOTE: The lack of photographs will reduce the usefulness of the materials in checking the rolls. END NOTE).

**¶4.** (U) The political party representatives used the forum to discuss the exercise. An official of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) said it was suspicious that the more days the exercise went on, the longer the lines became of would-be registrants. Party representatives asked about how registration materials were distributed, as some areas experienced shortages. One party representative alleged that voting registration was continuing now in parts of the country, well past the close of the exercise, a charge Afari-Gyan did not respond to. Afari-Gyan did say that "the commission is the victim of the actions of political parties." He added that the EC didn't bus people to registration centers, or shoot guns, or do other disruptive activities, a clear reference to the political parties. He

said that "persons in position of authority" mis-behaved during the process. He also said that he was not happy with the police, who in some registration centers did not maintain order. However, the Chairman did say that there would be "no chaos come the election." Should under-age votes be found on the voter registry, Afari-Gyan said that a collective response would be needed involving EC and the political parties.

15. (SBU) COMMENT. Dr. Afari-Gyan was frank in his assessment of the recently completed voter registration exercise-- there were problems, and the political parties are at least partially culpable. However, the test now is for the EC to manage the exhibition and cleansing of the roll, quite possibly involving a significant number of under-aged or double-registered voters. There was a hesitancy among the IPAC members to discuss the "what next?" question, and how the process would move ahead should-- as is likely-- there be contention over the integrity of the voter rolls. The pre-election process is also behind schedule by several weeks, giving the EC and the parties less time to come to a satisfactory solution. Finally, assessing the quality of the voter rolls is all the more difficult in a country where, especially in rural areas, many people do not have birth certificates or other proof of exact age. END COMMENT.

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